(c) what steps are being taken to retain operational preparedness;

(d) if not, whether any contradiction to such reports was issued by Government; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (e) Information can not be divulged in the interest of National Security.

Remuneration to army *vis-a-vis* GREF officers

1710. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) personnel are being treated as civilians in uniform by the Army;

(b) if not, whether it is necessary to impose Army Act on civilians for working restlessly like Army without pay of that standard;

(c) whether it is also a fact that army officers of equivalent rank are being paid more remuneration for the same type of work/deployment compared to General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) officers; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) Yes, Sir. However, GREF is declared as ''Integral Part of Armed Forces'' only for the purpose of Article 33 of Constitution of India.

(b) The provisions of Army Act 1950 and Army Rules 1954 have been made applicable to GREF personnel *vide* SRO No.329 and 330 both dated 23rd September 1960 for the purpose of discipline only.

(c) and (d) The remuneration paid to GREF and Army Officers is different as the terms and conditions of service, criteria for promotion and rank structure of the Army are different from those for GREF.

Medical coverage to GREF/BRO personnel

1711. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether medical coverage to GREF/BRO personnel is similar to Army or Central Government employees;

(b) if it is like Central Government employees how many personnel are availing CGHS facilities and at how many places this facility is provided; and

(c) if it is like the Army, how many people are treated in Army hospitals?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) GREF personnel are governed by CS (Medical Attendance) Rules, 1944. At present CGHS facilities are available only in major cities of the country. Since most of GREF Projects/Units are deployed in remote/field areas where Civil Hospitals with specialized treatment

are not available, they get treatment from Army Hospitals subject to either of the condition that no civil hospital exists in that location or even if it is exists there is no accommodation in the civil hospital. No separate data is maintained regarding the number of GREF persons availing CGHS facilities or getting treatment from Army Hospitals.

Enhancement of uncongenial climate allowance

1712. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has cleared a proposal to enhance uncongenial climate allowance by over four times and increase travel facilities for armed forces personnel posted in isolated and hazardous high altitude areas along the Line of Control; and

(b) if so, the details of the new rates?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) The High Altitude (Uncongenial Climate) Allowance is payable to Armed Forces personnel deployed in High Altitude (Uncongenial Climate) areas. The Government has recently decided to grant enhanced rates of High Altitude (Uncongenial Climate) Allowance to troops deployed in more difficult, hazardous and isolated areas above 14000 ft within the existing High Altitude (Uncongenial Climate) Areas at the rate of Rs.5600 per month for Officers and Rs.3734 per month for Personnel Below Officer Rank with a view to rationalize the High Altitude Allowance. The enhanced allowance is 80% of Siachen allowance and is comparable to Siachen allowance in proportion to the physical hardships being faced by the Armed Force Personnel.

Besides, the Government has decided to provide the following travel facilities for Armed Forces personnel:

(i) Grant of one additional free rail warrant every year to all ranks of Armed Forces serving in field/high altitude/counter insurgency/counter terrorism operational areas to travel to and from their duty station and Home Town/Selected Place of Residence.

(ii) All Service personnel would be eligible to avail leave travel concession once in a year to their hometown in India or Selected Place of Residence in India and every alternate year to any place in India in lieu of hometown or Selected Place of Residence without any distance restriction.

Revealing of military information by army personnel

1713. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Army personnel are revealing startling military information on one of the most popular online social networking sites known as Orkut;

(b) if so, whether Indian Army has instituted an enquiry into such incidents; and